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ANNUAL ADDRESS

OF THE

PRESIDENT

OF THE

New England Historic-Genealogical Society.

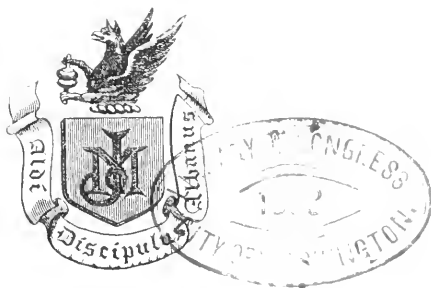
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JANUARY 6TH, 1864.

BY

WINSLOW LEWIS, M. D.

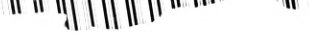
FROM THE NEW ENGLAND HISTORICAL AND GENEALOGICAL REGISTER



ALBANY, N. Y. :

J. MUNSELL, 78 STATE STREET.

1864.



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### New England Historic-Genealogical Society.

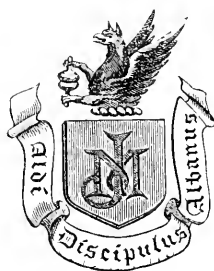
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## ANNUAL ADDRESS OF THE PRESIDENT.

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Gentlemen, Members and Friends of our Society.

This day — the 6th of January — and the first of our meeting in the new year, is an anniversary of no slight note, in the annals alike of the Christian church, and in those of the social life of the old “Mother Country,” from which all derive, not only our descent, but so many bright and good old memories, associations, anniversaries, whose light, still gently gleaming down upon us, through the portals of the *Past*, gives a soft and mellowed mildness to the otherwise too keen and piercing glare of the practical, utilitarian, money-making *Present*. To-day the church celebrates the Feasts of the Epiphany, or the manifestation of the Savior of Mankind by the leading of a star to the magi of the east — that event, so beautifully commemorated in Bishop Heber’s Hymn, which commences,

“Brightest and best of the sons of the morning,  
Dawn on our darkness and lend us thine aid,  
Star of the east, the horizon adorning,  
Guide where our Infant-Redeemer is laid.”

This day is also an anniversary of joy and feasting in Old England, under the name of Twelfth-Day, so full of pleasant memories and happy anticipations, especially to the young and light-hearted. “Few are unmoved by either agreeable or painful feelings, on account of ancient customs coming to their notice. We are in general similarly and more affected by recollections of sports familiar and dear to our childhood; which man, more than time, has changed, sometimes, and always to our thinking, for the worse.”

If you ask, what have such associations and memories as these to do with our society and our meeting to-day? I answer *much, very much*.

In the first place, without giving countenance to any of those superstitious feelings which led the ancient Persians, Greeks and Romans to select fortunate or “lucky days” for the performance of any important work, and which even in our own time, make many a hardy mariner, who would fearlessly encounter the most terrible dangers of the sea, shrink timidly from leaving port on a Friday, there is, nevertheless, something cheering and encouraging in entering upon any important work, which strongly enlists our interests, sympathies and hopes, on a day that has become illumined by fortunate and happy associations. And thus I hail it as a good omen for the increasing success of our society during the ensuing year, that we thus hold our first meeting on the blessed and blissful double anniversary of the Epiphany and of Twelfth-Day. But something more than this has led me to revert to these memories. Such a society as ours, whose labors are mainly devoted to tracing back the

history of our country and race, and the biography of our forefathers and friends, must, or ought to be, peculiarly alive to the interest and importance of those old anniversaries, festivals of the church, festal gatherings of the castle, the manor house, the homestead and the village green, which form so prominent a feature in the public and private life of the old homeland, to which we must still look lovingly and reverently back, as the parent and source of all that is best and noblest ; whether in the justice and wisdom of our laws, the freedom of our political institutions, or the energy, enterprise, perseverance and valor, that have raised the citizens and soldiers of America to the very front rank, alike of the pioneers of peace and civilization, and of the dauntless heroes of the most terrible and deadly war the world has ever witnessed.

We all have much to be thankful for at this opening of the new year, and no less ungrateful than ungrateful would it be to leave our thanks altogether unexpressed. The heart of each one of us here present will suggest many causes for gratitude to the Great and Good Being, who has given us to-day, in the midst of all earth's trials, so much cause for joy and comfort. For myself, at all events, who, during the past year, have suffered from an illness, which, in addition to its other trials, has prevented me, for many months, from sharing in your conferences and councils — I feel that I owe a deep debt of gratitude to the merciful Providence that has thus permitted me to resume my wonted place among those who have no less honored me by their public confidence, than they have cheered me by their private friendship and esteem.

But, over and above all considerations of a more personal nature, I think you will all agree with me, in deeming it to be a cause of congratulation, both to the two kindred countries, and to our society, every member of which, the further he pursues his historical and genealogical investigations, must feel the bond of relationship between New and Old England to be the closer and stronger — that those feelings of estrangement and almost of hostility, which had unhappily arisen between the two great Anglo-Saxon nations, have now been very greatly done away with, partly by the acts of the British government, and *still more*, by the free, frank voice of the English people. I think I may venture to say, in the name of our society, that we should deprecate estrangement, and much more, hostility, between America and England, as a circumstance to be deeply deplored by every friend of freedom, civilization and progress. Sprung from a common parent stock, speaking the same language, sharing in a common heritage of so much of glory, won in every field of thought and action, by the great and good of by-gone ages, claiming a just and equal portion of the rich intellectual inheritance handed down to us from Spencer and Chaucer, Milton and Shakespeare, Goldsmith and Johnson, Robertson and Gibbon — united thus by a chain of kindred, whose links are formed from such firm and fair materials as kinship, religion, language, literature, law and freedom, surely we, the strong sons of a strong sire, ought to feel that nothing short of the most direful necessity ought to be allowed to kindle in our hearts any hostile feelings against our "Old Home."

And now, to turn from external affairs to those more intimately connected with our society, I find from the information afforded me



by our treasurer, secretaries and librarian, that here we have much cause for satisfaction and rejoicing. During the past year, our society has continued to make good and steady progress. It has added many distinguished members, both native and foreign, to its lists, and many valuable books and pamphlets to its library, so that to-day, we can point with a just pride to a roll of about 500 members, and a catalogue of 6,000 volumes, and 10,000 pamphlets. To this number, is to be added the donation of the late Lt. Gov. Henry W. Cushman, of about 600 books, and 500 copies of the genealogy of the Cushman family, the last to be disposed of by the society, the proceeds to constitute a separate fund, to be set apart for binding &c. The biography of this eminent friend and benefactor of our society, will be given in a short time by our historiographer, and detailed in a more faithful and more eloquent manner than I could flatter myself to be able to accomplish. If we compare this state of things with the small beginning of five members, with which the society started in 1844, so large a measure of success must equally excite our surprise, and stimulate our gratitude towards those officers and members, who have been so greatly instrumental in promoting this healthy and prosperous condition of our affairs. And, while I know that a fair and liberal share of that gratitude is due to the gentlemen who have formerly, at different times, occupied the working offices amongst us, I am sure you will all agree with me in acknowledging our deep indebtedness to our present staff, and especially to our respected and energetic treasurer, who continues to manage the pecuniary affairs of the society with such ability, punctuality and zeal.

I cannot advert, however, to this increasing success of the society, particularly in the library department, without once more dwelling upon the urgent need there is — *more urgent now than ever* — for better, more capacious, and *safer* premises. Now, more than ever before, we need, first of all, a fire-proof room to secure our books, pamphlets, and other documents. The same amount of rare and valuable documents on New England genealogy and biography is not to be found in the archives of any other society in existence; and were such a calamity as fire to destroy this collection, would be irreparable, not only alone to us, but to the people of New England at large. We require, also, and the present position of the society imperatively demands, that we should have a larger and more commodious hall, in which to hold our monthly meetings. Much mutual good would result from inviting the attendance of our wives and daughters and other ladies, to listen to the monthly lectures, which are as interesting as, and certainly more instructive, than many of a more pretentious character, delivered in other institutions. But a lecture-room, to be attractive to a fair and refined audience, ought to afford not only sufficient accommodation, but also something of artistic grace and beauty. However we may honor the stern simplicity of our Puritan ancestors, it can not be denied that greater knowledge of the human heart has been shown by those, who, in various ages, have striven to give to their ecclesiastical buildings, and other places of public resort, all the adornment that architectural science and æsthetic taste could bestow; and the more cultivated and refined soci-

ety becomes, the more need is there for paying careful attention to these outer accessories. For my own part, I do not hesitate to say, that in visiting the old cathedrals of England and of the continent of Europe, I have felt my spirit to be raised and solemnized even by the architectual grandeur and beauty of the buildings — the long and lofty aisles — the rich tracery — the life-like sculpture — and then the dim and mellowed light streaming down through the old stained windows in their deeply mullioned recesses — and when, with feelings thus attuned by the eye to the contemplation of the lofty and sublime, there has arisen on my *ear* the grand and swelling peal of the organ, pouring forth some sacred, soul-stirring symphony of Mendelssohn or Handel, I have felt as though earth and earthly things were put away, while in their place there breathed around me the spirit and the voice of the holy and the heavenly.

And the same law of æsthetic association applies to halls devoted to the study of science, of history, of art, aye, and let me add even of politics, as well as to the edifices consecrated to religion. Well was the importance of this fact recognized by the free and enlightened people of ancient Athens.

Each temple, hall and portico — nay, every private house of any mark in that glorious centre and metropolis of philosophy and science, was not only built in a pure and graceful style of architecture, but was adorned with the images and statues of the great and good of former ages. By this means in *private* life, constant lessons of valor, virtue and knowledge were afforded to the young, in their fathers' homes, while in *public*, the patriot-orator could point to the statues of Harmodius and Aristogiton — of Cadmus, the patriot king, — Miltiades, Aristides, and all the rest of the heroic band who had fought and bled and died in defence of Greece's freedom. The teacher of philosophy could illustrate and enforce his lessons by the all but breathing images of Pythagoras, of Socrates, and of Plato. The poet could derive fresh inspiration from gazing on the rapt features of Homer, of Æschylus, of Sophocles, of Æleas and Pindar and Sappho. The mathematician was cheered and sustained in his arduous studies by contemplating the countenances of Anaxagoras, Anaximander, Euclid, and the other great Grecian masters of scientific research, to whom we, of this modern time, owe so deep and eternal obligations. Yes, all Athens was one vast temple, adorned with the images of all that was greatest, noblest, best and bravest in that olden time, in the united realms of poetry and philosophy, patriotism, valor and learning; and the high position accorded to her even in the days of her decline, "when captive Greece took captive conquering Rome," sufficiently attests the mighty and marvelous effects of this æsthetic teaching; nor is it less attested by the veneration in which her language and literature and remains of art are held to this day in all cultivated communities, as well as by the feeling of melancholy with which we think of her departed glory — a feeling so well embodied in Byron's words:

"Ancient of Days! — August Athena! where,

"Where are thy men of might? thy grand in soul?

"Gone! glimmering through the dream of things that were,

"First in the race that led to Glory's goal,

"They won and passed away! — is this the whole?

- “ A schoolboy’s tale, the wonder of an hour ?  
 “ The warrior’s weapon, and the sophist’s stole  
 “ Are sought in vain—and o’er each mouldering tower,  
 “ Dim with the mist of years, gray flits the shade of Power.”

It must be almost superfluous to point out how peculiarly the example of Athens, is worthy of all possible imitation by such a society as ours. Surely, it is not our purpose or mission, to pursue our historical and genealogical inquiries, merely for the gratification of a spirit of antiquarian curiosity. Our real and ultimate object is something far nobler, wider and grander than this, which is, indeed, only the necessary means to the end in view. In tracing back the genealogical history of our forefathers, the pioneers and planters of New England’s prosperity and power, we desire to do honor to departed worth, and to hold forth its example for the imitation and emulation of our own and after generations ; and in this way we are hoping and endeavoring to discharge our duty as citizens and patriots to our beloved country. To a great extent this is in course of accomplishment by means of our Biographical Papers, and by our Periodical, *The N. E. Historical and Genealogical Register*; a work to which I shall have to allude again. But we are all conscious that there is as much force to-day, as in the age of Augustus, in the proverb of Horace:—

- “ Segnius irritant animos demissa per aurem,  
 “ Quam quæ sunt oculis subjecta fidelibus, et quæ  
 “ Ipse sibi tradit Spectator.”

Our lectures may do much — the able memoirs of our learned historians may do much — pages of the advertiser may do much, to bring the lives and character of our country’s worthies before the “mind’s eye” of ourselves and our children: but to render such teaching thoroughly telling and effective, and to enable this society to discharge fully and faithfully this, its high and responsible duty, of holding up the beacon-light of the *Past* for the guidance of our youth, through the dangerous shoals and quicksands of the stormy *Present*, we must have over and around and before us in our public place of meeting, the *presentments*, in sculpture or on canvass, of the Fathers and friends of American freedom and greatness ; and, on the same principle, should be encouraged the preservation, in our private residences, of like memorials, ever present to the eye, of our progenitors. What more likely to arrest and check a son, about to commit some mean, dishonorable or cowardly action, than a sudden, unpremeditated glance at the picture or statute of a father or forefathers, who had left behind him a name consecrated by the memory of all that was honorable, manly and noble ? and who shall say what powerful influence may be exercised upon the hearts of our members and visitors, by seeing before them, whenever they enter our Hall, the honored and revered representatives of the heroic Fathers of American Independence, the men, who were no less illustrious for their private virtues, than for their public services ? Surely the Hall of an Historical and Genealogical Society ought, beyond every other building, to be richly furnished and adorned with these embodied lessons of life-teaching!

I do trust, that the Society, will *at once* vigorously take up this vitally important subject, and that the year, on which we are entering

may, before its close, see us located in a building, combining the requisites I have enumerated of *size, safety, tasteful architecture, and pictorial and sculptural adornment*. "Dimidium facti, qui cepit, habet," "He has accomplished half his task, who has begun it," says a Latin proverb, and the familiar French one is no less true, "Ce n'est pas que le premier pas qui coûte," It is only the first step that costs, (or is troublesome); and I feel quite sure, it only requires this first step, to be vigorously and resolutely taken, to insure success. Every member can help in some way, if not with a large subscription, yet with a small one,—if not with his purse, yet with his personal exertion and influence, exercised upon others. Let us realize the duty incumbent upon us in this matter, elevate our minds to a proper sense of its dignity and importance, and then let us set to, with a strong pull, a long pull, and a pull altogether, "and we shall soon bring our boat into the wished-for haven of safety, security and success!"

And now, permit me to revert again to what I may term the official organ of our Society: I mean of course the *New England Historical and Genealogical Register*, a work, whose merits and value, have not, I think, been as yet so generally appreciated, as they have deserved. Even in the matter of portraits, it constitutes a valuable contribution towards that apparatus of pictorial and sculptured teaching, on which I have dwelt at some length. There are published in the *Register*, no less than 64 engravings, and with two exceptions portraits, with also many wood engravings of the armorial bearings of the families recorded in the work, and I mention as among the names of our great departed ones, thus preserved ever-present to our eye, those of Woodbury and Mather, Chief Justice Sewall, Winthrop, Winslow, Chauncy, Oliver Wolcott, Prince, Adams, Trumbull, Webster, Parsons and Appleton — it will appear more plainly what a valuable repertory of illustrated New England Biography exists in this publication. The *Register* now consists of 17 octavo volumes, being a consecutive series from the year 1847 to the present time; and speaking for myself, I can thankfully assert, that as I look around my library, my eye does not fall upon any set of volumes more graceful in outward appearance, or more valuable, and dear to my heart as a New Englander, from the nature of their contents. I believe the work to be in every way worthy of the support, not only of this Society, but of every patriotic American, and above all, of every son of *New England*, to whose heart the memories of the *Pilgrim Fathers* and their descendants are venerable and dear. We owe it to ourselves, to the objects of our Society, and to the interests of our common country, to foster and encourage this valuable publication, and I trust my appeal in its behalf will not be altogether in vain. It may be made, allow me to add, even more than hitherto, a powerful means of advocating and advancing the interests and objects of our institution.

I feel that I have but very weakly and inadequately expressed what I have wished to say to you, at this first meeting of our New Year, a year likely, I think and trust, to prove an auspicious and happy one in the annals of our Society. But you will, I know, kindly make allowance for a deficiency, which is the necessary result of a weakened state of health; and I also know that you will give me

credit for sincerity in what I have ventured to suggest or advise. I believe my views are practicable and feasible and I am quite sure that if carried out by you, they will place the Society on so solid a basis, and elevate it to so dignified and useful a position, as will render it an organization of the most valuable and beneficial kind to America at large, and to New England in particular. Surely, not one of us can need any other spur or stimulus to urge us to the attainment of so grand, so glorious an object !

I can leave no nobler, or more soul-inspiring thought resting on your minds, and will therefore close with the Trojan Hero's words :

“ The one best omen is our country's cause ! ”





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